



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/895,876	07/02/2001	Taylor Pursell	46104	5376
20736	7590	11/01/2004	EXAMINER	
MANELLI DENISON & SELTER 2000 M STREET NW SUITE 700 WASHINGTON, DC 20036-3307			CLARDY, S	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			1616	

DATE MAILED: 11/01/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/895,876

Applicant(s)

PURSELL ET AL.

Examiner

S. Mark Clardy

Art Unit

1616

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 29 June 2004.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 15-50,52-59,61-169,171-198 and 200-202 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 15-50,52-59,61-98,123-169,171-184,201 and 202 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 99-122,185-198 and 200 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Art Unit: 1616

Claims 15-50, 52-59, 61-169, 171-198, and 200-202 are pending in this application which claims the benefit under 35 USC 119(e) of US Provisional Applications No. 60/216,162, and 60/254,178, filed July 3, 2000, and December 11, 2000, respectively.

Applicants are requested to clarify whether claim 170 is pending. In the response filed February 5, 2004, claim 170 was not listed among the pending claims, but in the claim listing, it still appeared as a pending claim. The responses appear to indicate that it is cancelled; it has been treated as though it had been cancelled.

Claims 15-50, 52-59, 61-98, 123-169, 171-184, 201, and 202 are allowable over the cited prior art in response to applicants' arguments filed June 29, 2004.

Again, applicants' claims are drawn to controlled release agricultural absorbent compositions (claims 15-50, 52-59, 61-122, 142-144, 202) and methods of making them (claims 123-141, 145-169, 171-201) comprising:

- 1) absorbent particulate material with 10-200 μ diameter capillaries/voids
claim 18: expanded or exfoliated (claim 63) perlite, shredded newspaper, saw dust, cotton lint, ground corn cobs, corn cob flour, Metrecz absorbent, diatomaceous earth.
- 2) agricultural materials (optionally with an interspatial blocker¹, claim 35-49)
fertilizers (claims 7-14, 23-31): NPK, micronutrients, secondary nutrients, nitrification regulators², growth regulators³
insecticides(claim32): OO-diethylO-(2-isopropyl-6-methyl-4-pyrimidinyl)phosphoro-thioate
herbicides (claim 33): 2,4-D
fungicides (claim 34): ferric dimethyldithiocarbamate

¹E.g., plant starches, protein gels, glues, gums, crystallizing compounds (sodium silicate, phosphate cements, calcium oxide cements, hydraulic cements: claim 44), gelling clays, synthetic gel forming compounds.

²Claim 31: 2-chloro-6-trichloromethylpyridine, sulfathiazole, dicyandiamide, thiourea, guanyltiourea

³Claim 30: potassium azide, 2-amino-4-chloro-6-methylpyrimidine, N-2,5-dicorphenyl succinamide, 4-amino-1,2,4-triazole hydrochloride

Art Unit: 1616

The capillary/void spaces are impregnated (40-95%) with the agricultural materials by first absorbing water into the particulate material which is then heated to form steam. The heated absorbent particulate material is then placed into an aqueous solution of the active agent which is apparently pulled into the capillary spaces which were vacated by the escaping steam. The resultant absorbent particulate material is then agglomerated into granules (claims 15-50, 52-59, 61-98, 123-169, 171-184, 201, and 202). Claims 99-122, 185-198, and 200, do not require the compositions to be agglomerated. Only fertilizer compositions have been tested.

The rejection under the judicially created doctrine of double patenting over claims 1-28 of copending Application No. 10/460,650, is withdrawn in response to the Terminal Disclaimer filed June 29, 2004.

Claims 99-103, 107, 120, 121, 185-188, 192, and 197, are again rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(a), (b), or (e) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Huber et al (4,923,506), alone.

Note that claim 102 (or claim 99), should it be determined to be allowable, will need to be corrected. Claim 102, which depends from claim 99, recites "the interspatial blocker", for which there is no antecedent basis in claim 99.

Again, these claims are drawn to granular compositions that do not make use of any absorbent particles (such as perlite). Huber et al, however, disclose that polyhydroxy polymers such as gels, starches (such as corn starch or acid modified starch), or cellulose materials are useful for formulating granular controlled release compositions comprising fertilizers or other agriculturally useful materials (see abstract, and columns 1-2). Further, the polyhydroxy materials are present at amounts ranging from 5-95% of the composition (col 3, lines 1-3).

Art Unit: 1616

Among the active agents are diazinon and 2,4-D. No specific fungicides or fertilizer materials are disclosed, nor is heating applied during the mixing step.

Applicants argue that the incorporation of salts in the compositions of Huber et al renders the patent non-anticipatory. However, addition of other materials in Huber et al does not detract from the teachings of Huber et al, which read on applicants' claims, which require neither agglomeration, nor the absence of salts. Insertion of such a negative limitation would be new matter.

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 99-122, 185-198, and 200 are again rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combined teachings of Pierce (US 3,172,752), Burkett (US 2,779,670), and Huber et al (cited above), for reasons of record, repeated below.

Pierce, again, teaches controlled release agrochemical compositions comprising the combination of active agents coated onto expanded perlite particles with the coating completely filling the pores of the perlite particles (col 2, lines 40-61). To make the compositions, the perlite particles are heated to drive off part of the combined water, or water of crystallization to generate gas pressure in the bubbles within the perlite (col 3, lines 50-55). With the particles pre-heated, the coating liquid is sucked into and generally will fill all pores exposed to or communicating with the surface, especially if a wetting agent is used (col 4, lines 40-46; col 9, lines 36-46). Soluble cellulose such as methyl cellulose is disclosed as a holding material which is useful as a carrier for active agents such as insecticides, fungicides, herbicides, etc. (col 6, lines 15-40). Additional holding materials are disclosed in columns 6-7. Processes for forming tablets or pellets are also described (columns 16 and 21).

Burkett, again, teaches soil conditioning and fertilizing compositions comprising agriculturally active chemicals distributed uniformly throughout the soil conditioner (col 1, lines 42-47). Expanded natural perlite is used for the carrier material (column 2); it is heated in a kiln at a temperature of 900° F to 1450° F (lines 70-71) and is then discharged

Art Unit: 1616

into an aqueous solution of the desired agricultural additives in a mixing tank. The open pores, cells, bubbles, and interstices in the expanded perlite then absorb the liquid solution in excess of 11.5 times the weight of the perlite (col 3, lines 1-12). Claim 2 incorporates a final step for forming pellets.

Huber et al, again, teaches that starches, gums, cellulose derivatives and other polyhydroxy polymers are equivalent carrier materials which function as controlled release matrices (column 2) for agriculturally active agents such as fertilizers, plant growth regulators, and various pesticides (col 3, lines 10-23). One of ordinary skill in the art would be motivated to use the carrier materials of Huber et al for the carrier or "holding" materials of Pierce because they exhibit the required holding characteristics of Burkett, and because methyl cellulose is specifically disclosed in both references.

One of ordinary skill in the art would be motivated to combine Pierce and Burkett because they disclose the step of heating perlite prior to absorbing an agriculturally useful liquid composition into the pores of the heated perlite.

Again, it would have been *prima facie* obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have combined applicants' absorbent particulate materials and agriculturally active agents in a single composition because the prior art teaches the concept of heating a carrier such as perlite to drive off water or steam which is contained in the spaces or pores of the perlite, which are then filled by an agriculturally useful liquid composition when the perlite is submerged in the liquid. The technique would appear to be applicable to any solid carrier which has a large internal surface area, i.e., cells and pores throughout the structure. Further, it would be *prima facie* obvious to the ordinary artisan that the technique would be useful for any active agent capable of being solubilized. Huber has been cited to teach the equivalence of methyl cellulose, as taught in Pierce, with starches, gels, and other polyhydroxy materials, as carriers for agriculturally useful materials. There would appear to be no functional difference between the "holding materials" of Pierce, the polyhydroxy carriers of Huber et al, or the "interspatial blocker materials" of the instant invention.

Art Unit: 1616

The heat treatment as disclosed in the specification appears to be the same as that in the prior art, thus the exfoliated form also would appear to be taught in the prior art. While the drawings of Pierce recognize that some of the internal voids remain separated from any surface contact (i.e., do not communicate with the surface of the particle), the particulate materials exhibit a controlled release characteristic that results from increasing the amount of active agents which are entrapped within surface communicating pores of the expanded perlite, rather than being deposited on the surface of the particle (col 17, lines 42-54).

While Pierce and Burkett focus on compositions comprising heated, expanded, and/or exfoliated perlite as the particulate material within which the other components are sequestered, as opposed to applicants' invention which is not limited to perlite (see claim 15), note that the disclosures of perlite compositions in the cited prior art still read on the generically disclosed compositions. For claims 99-122 and 185-200, which do not require the presence of the absorbent (e.g., perlite) material, these claims do not require its absence, either, nor the absence of the salts of Huber et al.

Allowable subject matter has been indicated above.

THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL. Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

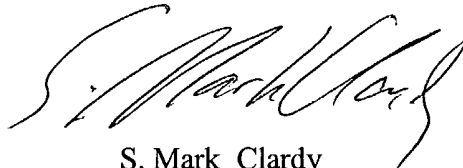
A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Art Unit: 1616

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to S. Mark Clardy whose telephone number is 571-272-0611. The examiner can normally be reached on 7:30-5:00.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Gary Kunz can be reached on 571-272-0887. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Mark Clardy', with a stylized, flowing script.

S. Mark Clardy
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 1616

October 28, 2004